EDITOR: SUZANNE MANTELL

Assassination Anniversary Marked by 'Definitive' Works

Several big books purport to answer the question, Who killed JFK? Unfortunately, their findings conflict

BY ROBERT DAHLIN

The very same images from Dallas that prove to one man's satisfaction that Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone in killing President Kennedy 30 years ago this November lead another to conclude with confidence that a hideous conspiracy destroyed him.

Such starkly conflicting views will collide in bookstores this fall from, among other houses, Random House and Viking. Though wave after wave of books on the assassination have appeared in the years since President Kennedy's death, it is noteworthy that this season brings books from large houses that can afford lavish productions and promotion, which has not been the case with most of the earlier books on the subject.

The Lone Assassin

Random's *Case Closed: Lee Harvey Oswald and the Assassination of JFK* by Gerald L. Posner (Oct., $25, with 16 pages of black-and-white photos) takes what has come to be the more controversial position—the single gunman theory, which holds that Oswald acted alone. This is the official position of the Warren Commission, about which Posner is otherwise critical. To reach his conclusion, which the publisher says answers all lingering questions about the assassination, Posner, a lawyer and author, reexamined the case, conducted dozens of new interviews and viewed computer and laser enhancements of the eyewitness Zapruder film. Posner was unavailable for comment at this writing.

Random House vice-president and executive editor Bob Loomis is reluctant to reveal much of the book's contents: It's too early, he says. "We commissioned this book a couple of years ago," he explains. "At the heart of it is a biography of Lee Harvey Oswald that confronts various conspiracy theories as it goes along. Posner takes up separate episodes as they occur in history—episodes in Oswald's life, in [Jack] Ruby's life—making a chronological scenario in which we see how it all fits together."

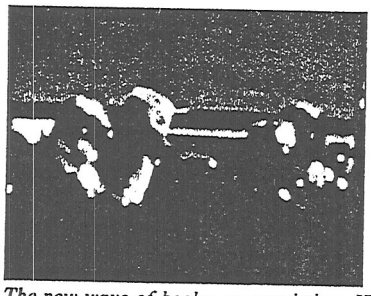
Loomis says Posner has followed leads that no one else has, receiving new cooperation from Marina Oswald, the autopsy doctors, Oswald's friends and others. "All the conspiracy theories have undermined the public's belief in the government," Loomis says. "They believe that everybody's in cahoots, that we have murderers in the CIA. That's what has been accepted, and that, to me, is a crime."

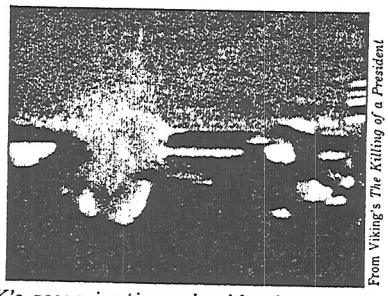
Because Posner steadfastly rejects the conspiracy theories in a heavily footnoted argument, Loomis expects the book to arouse controversy. "It's not that the people who have written otherwise are frauds," he contends, "but there is almost a religious fervor out there about conspiracies that is impervious to contrary evidence." A 50,000-copy first printing is planned, with author tour, advertising and an *At Random* feature. First serial rights have been picked up by *U.S. News & World Report*.

Photos Prove Conspiracy

Just as Posner sees the Zapruder film as confirmation of the lone assassin theory, Robert J. Groden sees it as proving exactly the opposite. There was a conspiracy, he asserts. *The Killing of a President: The Complete Photographic Record of the JFK Assassination, the Conspiracy and the Cover-Up* (Viking Studio, Nov., $30) uses computer technology to uncover new details and provides hitherto expurgated transcripts—including that of Jacqueline Kennedy's testimony before the Warren Commission, which is shown to have been originally edited for public consumption. Groden, who has been a student of the assassination since it occurred, was staff photographic consultant to the House Select Committee on Assassinations, as well as technical advisor to Oliver Stone on his film *JFK*. Groden was also unavailable for comment.

Speaking for him, Michael Fragnito, editorial director of Viking Studio Books, says *The Killing of the President* is the only book to be entirely comprehensive in the sheer number and quality of photographic evidence. "There will be more than 650 photographs in color and quadratone," he says, "and a four-color separation of black-and-white photos for maximum clarity. More than 100 of the photographs here have never been published before." Among these are previously suppressed color photos of the autopsy on JFK's body that record bullet entries, and a restoration of the damaged frames of the Zapruder film.





From Viking's *The Killing of a President*

The new wave of books reexamining JFK's assassination mix old evidence and new technology. Here, "enhanced" frames from the Zapruder film.

Groden also reportedly uncovered new details in photos already available. "Some of the photographs taken right after the shots were fired show people running toward the grassy knoll [behind], where they saw a puff of smoke," Fragnito says. "Robert makes it very clear that the shot that killed Kennedy came from the front, and if that is true, a conspiracy certainly did occur.

"Robert calls this a howdunit, not a whodunit," continues Fragnito. "He's not one of those wacko assassination buffs. His point is that a conspiracy occurred, but he doesn't claim to know

Out of the Past, in Spanish and English

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A bilingual record of American history with pictures that illustrate major themes in the country's life and bloodstream is the concept behind American Highlights/Los Estados Unidos: United States History in Notable Works of Art/Grandes Momentos en su Historia a Través de Prominentes Obras de Arte, ***by Edith Pavese, published this month by Abrams ($29.95). All of the text appears in both English and Spanish. Shown here: Red Grooms's wood construction*** Somewhere in Beverly Hills/En algún lugar de Beverly Hills ***(1966–67). Abrams plans to direct the book largely to the educational market, and to follow up with Japanese, French, German and Russian in place of the Spanish.***

who the participants were." Viking plans a 100,000-copy first printing, national publicity campaign and satellite tour, and is looking for a way to give the book a lavish launch in Dallas or on TV.

History of the Literature

Scores of possible participants are exposed in *Who Shot JFK? A Guide to the Major Conspiracy Theories* ($12), an October Fireside original from Simon & Schuster. Written by Bob Callahan, a book packager and former speech writer for Sen. Robert Kennedy, illustrated by artist Mark Zingarelli and based on information compiled by David Park and Peter Dale Scott, *Who Shot JFK?* profiles upward of 20 conspiracy speculations.

"My work for Robert Kennedy might have blinded me to all these theories until the Stone movie jerked me awake," Callahan says from his home base in California. "I think this is a real murder case, and I have a feeling that all of the pieces still aren't there."

Explaining his book, which he calls "a history of the literature of the conspiracy, he says, "it's like a chronological *Reader's Digest* version of my reading of all this stuff. It's the most comprehensive look at the history of the arguments as they developed." Oswald was involved in the assassination, Callahan concedes, and there may even be a remote possibility that he acted alone. "But I wanted to establish sympathy for the point that this is still an open case," he says. "The problem is the politics surrounding the case. The people around Oliver Stone were on a blind leftie mission. They were just as blind as the Warren Commission was."

Zingarelli's *noir* graphics are reminiscent of those found in the old *True Crime Quarterly*, says Callahan: "Mark's art is driven by the narrative. If the theories get goofy, the art gets goofy, and it's serious where it should be."

S & S has extensive marketing plans, with reader's copies at the ABA, a five-city author tour, a 25-city radio satellite tour, national print advertising and a counter display with riser. The first printing is 35,000.

Other Entries, Other Opinions

Carroll & Graf's November entry is *Killing the Truth: Deceit and Deception in the JFK Case* ($23). The author is Harrison Edward Livingstone, a conspiracy believer, who, with Robert J. Groden (see Viking book above), wrote *High Treason*, self-published in hardcover by Livingstone several years ago and put into paperback by Berkley. Carroll & Graf published Livingstone's *High Treason 2* in hardcover in 1992, and will produce the trade paperback this year.

"Most of the people who've done the research and interviewing on the assassination have been independent writers," says publisher Kent Carroll. "*Killing the Truth* is about who these people are. It suggests that many have, for one reason or another, put out a lot of disinformation, furthering the conspiracy.

"Livingstone," continues Carroll, "knows what he's talking about. He's the guy who discovered and made public the fact that Kennedy's adrenal glands had atrophied because of medication he was taking. He also theorized that he would probably have died in office anyway." First printing will be at least 50,000 copies, Carroll says.

David S. Lifton is still working on the manuscript of a Lee Harvey Oswald biography, so his book for Dutton, *Oswald: He Led Three Lives*, has been postponed until 1994. Lifton, who earlier wrote *Best Evidence*, which charged an assassination conspiracy at the highest levels of the federal government, has reportedly been granted unlimited access to Marina Oswald and has conducted interviews with the Russians who knew her husband.

In November, Dutton will publish *Cause of Death: The Final Diagnosis* ($23) by Cyril Wecht, a forensic pathologist who intends to settle a number of disputatious cases, including that of JFK's death. The publisher says that Wecht offers new information on the president's missing brain, and thoroughly discredits the single-bullet theory. He also offers proof that Sirhan Sirhan could not have fired the shot that killed Robert Kennedy.

Deep Politics and the Death of JFK by Peter Dale Scott (see Fireside book above), a poet and professor of English at UC Berkeley, suggests that JFK's death was more than an isolated incident (University of California Press, Oct., $25). Scott maintains that it was symptomatic of a secret agenda being played out well beneath the surface of American international and domestic policies. Among his considerations are Kennedy's plans to withdraw troops from Vietnam, his split with his Joint Chiefs of Staff and a 1963 collaboration between Army Intelligence and the Dallas police.

On a more personal—and wrenching—note, an account of JFK's assassination is recalled from Edward Kennedy's point of view in Joe McGinniss's biography of the senior senator from Massachusetts, *The Last Brother* ($25), due in October from S & S, with a two-part serial forthcoming in *Vanity Fair*. The book portrays a man peripheral to the central drama of the Kennedy family, even during the aftermath of the Dallas shooting.